



Welcome to the Reading Animal Clinic! We are so excited to meet you and your pet at your upcoming appointment. At our new patient exams, there is a lot of information to review. We have provided this handout to aid in the understanding of the different vaccinations, testing, and other healthcare information that is important to the health of your pet. We look forward to providing you with the best veterinary care.

### **Vaccinations**

We use the most current research, from the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) guidelines to individually tailor your pet's vaccination schedule according to his or her risks.

Vaccines are broken down into two main categories. CORE vaccines are those vaccines that are highly recommended or required for every pet. NON-CORE vaccines are those vaccinations that are recommended based on your pet's lifestyle and health risks.

CORE vaccines for dogs include the canine distemper vaccine (DHPP) and Rabies vaccine.

- DHPP is a combination vaccine that helps protect against multiple viruses that attack the respiratory, gastrointestinal and nervous systems of dogs. This vaccine is given at 8 weeks, 12 weeks, 16 weeks, 1 year, then every 3 years.
- Rabies is a fatal viral disease that is transmitted through the bite of an infected animal, this is a required vaccine in Massachusetts. This vaccine is given after 12 weeks of age, at 1 year, then every 3 years.

NON-CORE vaccines for dogs include Leptospirosis, Lyme, Bordetella and Canine Influenza.

- Leptospirosis is caused by a bacteria spread through infected urine, or urine contaminated water. It causes liver and kidney failure in dogs. This vaccine is typically given after 12 weeks of age boosted 3-4 weeks later then re-boosted every year.
- Lyme disease is a bacterial disease transmitted by ticks causing lameness and sometimes kidney disease. This vaccine is given after 12 weeks of age boosted 3-4 weeks later then re-boosted every year.
- Bordetella is a highly contagious respiratory disease caused by a bacteria and causes a hacking cough. It can also cause fever, lethargy, nasal discharge and pneumonia. This vaccine is typically performed after 8 weeks of age, then annually as needed.
- Canine Influenza Virus is a highly contagious respiratory virus which can spread easily to other dogs causing cough, fever, nasal or ocular discharge and decreased appetite. Severe infections can develop into pneumonia. This vaccine is typically given after 12 weeks of age boosted 3-4 weeks later then re-boosted every year as needed

### **Testing**

Fecal test screening is recommended annually, and you will be asked to bring in a fresh stool sample so that we can test for internal parasites. Internal parasites can cause vomiting, diarrhea,

and weight loss in your pet and sometimes can be transmitted to other pets or family members in the household.

**Common internal parasites encountered include:**

- Giardia: obtained by ingestion of infected water or contaminated surface. Frequently causes vomiting or diarrhea.
- Coccidia: infected by swallowing soil that contains coccidia or other substances in the environment that may contain dog feces. The most common sign of coccidiosis is diarrhea
- Roundworms: most common in young animals, may be transmitted by mother while in utero or through mother's milk. May be obtained through environment or ingestion of small animals that are infected. Frequently causes diarrhea, vomiting or weight loss.
- Hookworms: obtained through ingestion of contaminated soil or through skin penetration. Frequently causes weight loss and diarrhea.
- Tapeworms: most commonly obtained through ingestion of an infected flea but can be obtained by ingestion of an infected animal. You may not notice any adverse effect of this parasite other than witnessing "grains of rice" attached to the anal area or moving segments in the feces.
- Whipworms: obtained through ingestion of infected soil. Frequently causes bloody diarrhea.

For more information about internal parasites, please visit the Companion Animal Parasite Council (CAPC) website at [www.petsandparasites.org](http://www.petsandparasites.org).

Blood testing may be recommended based on your pet's prior history. For dogs, testing for heartworm disease and tick borne diseases is performed routinely.

**Behavior**

The prime age for socialization is between 8-16 weeks of age. It is recommended that your puppy be exposed to other animals during this time period. Puppy classes and socialization with other animals that you know is recommended.

**Pet Poison Hotline**

The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center (APCC) is your best resource for any animal poison-related emergency, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. If you think your pet may have ingested a potentially poisonous substance, call (888) 426-4435. A consultation fee may apply.

**Other Recommendations**

Preventatives for fleas, ticks and heartworm disease are recommended monthly all year long. There are topical, oral and injectable products available for dogs.

If your pet is experiencing an emergency, please contact us. You may be directed to your closest emergency clinic. Based on your current location, be aware of the following facilities.

Blue Pearl, Waltham  
180 Bear Hill Rd, Waltham, MA 02451  
(781) 684-8387

Blue Pearl, Charlestown  
56 Roland St, Boston, MA 02129

(617) 284-9777  
Angell MSPCA, Boston  
350 S Huntington Ave, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130  
(617) 522-7282  
Massachusetts Veterinary Referral Hospital, Woburn  
20 Cabot Rd, Woburn, MA 01801  
(781) 932-5802

It is recommended to be familiar with your closest emergency facility so that in the event of an emergency you know how to get there and how long it takes to arrive.

Please explore our clinic online at [www.readinganimalclinic.com](http://www.readinganimalclinic.com). Through our website you can access your pet's vaccination record, order refills of your pet's prescriptions, request appointments and browse the pet library. We also have an app for your mobile device called "Pet Page". Be sure to leave your email with us at the front desk so that you can access the app from your mobile device. If at any time, you have questions or concerns about your pet please feel free to contact us as (781) 944-1699 or email us at [rac@readinganimalclinic.com](mailto:rac@readinganimalclinic.com). We look forward to hearing from you soon!

### **Information About Heat Cycles**

Recently the age of when to spay your pet has become more of a personalized recommendation based on your pet's specific needs and breed rather than a standardized recommendation for age of spay. More dogs are going through at least one heat cycle to help prevent certain types of bone cancers, orthopedic diseases and urinary incontinence. This handout is to help answer some commonly asked questions. Please refer to your veterinarian for their recommendation on when you should spay your pet.

Onset of the heat cycle is variable depending on the breed of dog. Smaller breeds may enter their first heat cycle between 6-10 months of age. Large breed dogs may not begin to cycle until 18-24 months of age. On average, we see dogs come into their heat cycle around 6-9 months of age.

Dogs will cycle throughout the year and the average female dog will cycle every 7 months. Some will cycle every 5-11 months

What to expect:

- vaginal bleeding
- enlargement of the vulva, this may persist
- attraction of males
- change in behavior
- more frequent urination
- nipple enlargement, this may persist

How long will the bleeding last? Although it is variable, on average 7-10 days and the color of the discharge will likely change from a red color to a straw color.

When can I schedule the spay? Typically we prefer to schedule the spay 6-8 weeks after the